

**Office of Advocacy and Outreach**  
**Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers**  
**Charter**

1. **Committee's Official Designation**

This charter renews the Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers (the "Committee").

2. **Authority**

The Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers was established in the Department of Agriculture (USDA) pursuant to Section 14008 of the Food Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Pub. L. 110-246, 122 Stat. 1651, 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2279).

3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities**

The Committee's purpose is to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on:

- The implementation of Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 2279);
- Methods of maximizing the participation of minority farmers and ranchers in Department of Agriculture programs; and
- Civil rights activities within the Department as such activities relate to participants in such programs.

4. **Description of Duties**

The Committee shall advise the Secretary on the creation or elimination of policies or programmatic guidelines that will positively impact and maximize minority participation in USDA programs. The Committee is advisory in nature and its advice will center on ways and means of significantly improving the USDA's delivery of programs that service and support minority farmers. The Committee will also review costs of implementation and provide important perspectives on how the Department delivers services and where there are opportunities for improvement.

5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports**

The Committee reports to the Secretary through the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

6. **Support**

The USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO) will provide support to the Committee and to the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) in the conduct of the official duties of the Committee.

7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years**

The Committee's operating and staff budget will be \$101,000.00 and .25 full-time equivalent employees.

8. **Designated Federal Officer**

A full-time Federal employee will be appointed the DFO in accordance with agency procedures. The DFO will approve the advisory committee's and subcommittees' meetings, prepare and approve all meeting agendas, attend all committee and subcommittee meetings, adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings**

The Committee will have approximately four meetings per fiscal year as determined by the OAO. These meetings may be held virtually via teleconference or webinar in addition to at least one face-to-face meeting each year.

10. **Duration**

Continuing.

11. **Termination**

In accordance with Federal Advisory Committee Act Regulations, two years from the date of the filing of this charter, the committee will cease to meet until a renewal charter is filed.

12. **Membership and Designation**

12a. This Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Steps will be taken to encourage innovative ideas and varying points-of-view through such means as staggered membership terms and limiting the number of renewed memberships.

This Committee shall be comprised of not more than 15 members and includes:

- a. Not less than four farmers or ranchers;
- b. Not less than two representatives of nonprofit organizations with a history of working with socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers;
- c. Not less than two civil rights professionals;
- d. Not less than two representatives of institutions of higher education with demonstrated experience working with socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers;
- e. Such other persons as the Secretary deems appropriate.

The Secretary may appoint employees of USDA to serve as ex-officio members of the Committee.

12b. Equal opportunity practices in accordance with USDA policies will be followed in all appointments to the Committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA, membership shall include to the extent possible, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women and persons with disabilities.

12c. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

12d. Of these members, one will be elected the chairperson by the committee. He or she must be recognized for their ability to lead a group in a fair and focused manner and have been briefed on the mission of this Committee. Another member will be the vice-chairperson who will assist in the facilitating the Committee meetings with the chairperson.

#### 12e. Ethics Statement

To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity and ethical conduct, no Committee or subcommittee member shall participate in any “specific party matters” (i.e., matters are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct or indirect financial interest. This includes the requirement for Committee or Subcommittee members to immediately disclose to the DFO (for discussion with USDA’s Office of Ethics) any specific party matter in which the member’s immediate family, relatives, business partners or employer

would be directly seeking to financially benefit from the Committee's recommendations. Members of the Committee shall be required to disclose their direct or indirect interest in leases, licenses, permits, contracts, or claims that involve lands or resources administered by the Forest Service, or in any litigation related thereto.

All members will receive ethics training to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee's advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as "Representatives" are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector or segment of the public.

Members appointed as "Special Government Employees" (SGEs) are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGE's are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) and, upon request, USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

13. **Subcommittees**

The OAO has the authority to create subcommittees. Subcommittees must report back to the parent committee, and may not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. During the prior term, the following three subcommittees were established:

- a. Farm Service Agency (FSA)/Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)/Risk Management Agency (RMA)/Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) Subcommittee;
- b. Rural Development (RD)/Forrest Service (FS)/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Subcommittee; and
- c. Civil Rights Subcommittee.

The Agency may appoint individuals to newly established subcommittees as deemed necessary.

14. **Recordkeeping**

The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with General Records

Schedule 26, Item 2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552. Information regarding this Committee is available online at: <http://www.outreach.usda.gov/sdfr/FAC.htm>

15. **Filing Date**

November 19, 2014